

Migration of people from rural areas to cities

†1165. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that due to lack of jobs in many rural areas large number of people are migrating towards cities in order to get employment;

(b) if so, whether Government are going to make any arrangements to provide jobs to the people in rural areas itself in order to check their migration;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) to (d) Migration from rural areas to urban areas is due to many reasons, seeking employment being one among them. The Ministry of Rural Development is implementing the schemes, viz, Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) and Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) in the rural areas of the country for creating additional employment opportunities for the rural people. EAS is specially designed to create wage employment opportunities during the period of acute shortage of wage employment for rural persons.

Arsenic poisoning of ground water in West Bengal

1166. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to stop funding under the special Centrally sponsored scheme in West Bengal

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for tackling the problem of arsenic poisoning of the ground water in vast stretches of the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether this is to imply that the dimension of the problem has been reduced substantially, so much so, that it does not further warrant any Central support?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Rural drinking water supply is a State subject. State Governments take up schemes/projects for providing drinking water in rural areas from their own resources. Government of India supplements the efforts of the State Governments and provide financial assistance under Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) and Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY)— Rural Drinking Water (RDW). Under ARWSP, up to 20% of the allotted funds can be utilised to tackle water quality problem which *inter-alia* includes providing safe drinking water free from arsenic contamination and sustainability of sources. As reported by the Government of West Bengal, as on 1.4.1999, out of total 79,036 rural habitations in the State 3,133 habitations are affected with arsenic contamination.

To tackle arsenic contamination in drinking water, prior to 1.4.1998, under Sub-Mission programme of ARWSP, 3 projects were sanctioned to West Bengal at a total approved cost of Rs. 259.79 crore, out of which Government of India's share is about Rs. 194.84 crore and State share is Rs. 64.95 crore. So far Government of India has released Rs. 180.13 crore. Remaining funds Rs. 14.71 crore will be released on the basis of the progress of implementation and fulfillment of conditions laid down for the released of funds. Since

1.4.1998, powers to plan, approve and implement schemes under Sub-Mission have been delegated to the States. States can also take up schemes/projects to provide safe drinking water under PMGY-RDW and powers to approve schemes/projects have been delegated to State Governments. During 2000-2001, Rs. 78.37 crore under ARWSP and Rs. 58.74 crore under RDW component of PMGY were released. For the current year, Rs. 43.86 crore under ARWSP and Rs. 9.40 crore under RDW component of PMGY have been released as 1st installment.

Keeping in view the problem of arsenic contamination in ground water in the State, as a special case, instead of 20%, 50% of ARWSP funds have been allowed to be spent on tackling arsenic contamination in 24 North Parganas District. As per information received from the Government of West Bengal, after 1.4.1998, during 2000-2001, State Government has sanctioned two projects—one project in North 24 Parganas District at a total cost of Rs. 124.82 crore covering 318 habitations under ARWSP and another project in Malda district at a total cost of Rs. 43.00 crore covering 367 habitations under PMGY—Rural Drinking Water, for tackling arsenic problem in drinking water.

National conference of Panchayat Raj State Ministers

1167. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

SHRI N.R. DASARI:

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a national conference of the Panchayat Raj State Ministers was held in Delhi recently; and

(b) if so, the details of the subjects discussed therein and the outcome thereof?